

MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

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INSTRUCTIONS APPLY

INFORMATION
October 17, 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR GENERAL HAIG

THROUGH:

Phil Odeen

FROM:

John Bushnell

SUBJECT:

CIA Working Level Views

On October 12 I spent the afternoon with about a dozen CIA Vietnam division chiefs and analysts exploring their views of the situation and problems of intelligence acquisition.

General Conclusions on Situation

The following points on which there seemed to be a working level consensus are of interest.

-- There are no serious widespread logistics shortages for the NVA now in the North or South.

-- Imports into NVN are running at least at three-quarters of the normal (last year) level.

-- Shortages of imports are not a problem; the bombing problems are distribution, transportation within NVN, disruption, storage dispersal, supply management.

-- The analysts expect NVN to step up sea infiltration of supplies as soon as VNAF takes over the Market Time operations, not because they cannot bring the supplies down the trail but because it is cheaper and easier to bring them in by sea, especially to Binh Dinh and MR-4.

-- NVN and its Allies appear to be making preparations for a long period of overland supply to NVN; the construction of the fourth pipeline which the analysts expect will be matched by over 200 miles

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*I think
you will find
this of interest.
Phil*

*Thank
you*

of new pipeline construction in China would allow direct tanker to pipeline shipment (we do not yet have indications of pipeline construction in China however).

-- Recruitment/draft levels in NVN appear to have been at record levels during September, assuring availability of substantial numbers for infiltration about December.

-- Training cycles in NVN have not been reduced as they have in the South.

-- There have not been any replacement personnel infiltrated to COSVN since May; all the substantial inflow has been to MR-1.

-- There has been very little repair of bomb damaged industrial and electric facilities; there is no indication of import of replacement equipment and parts.

-- In short the general feeling is that NVN is on track for continuing intensive efforts in the South during 1973; there are no indications that any units will be pulled back into NVN or Cambodia.

Intelligence Assets Down

CIA will no longer be able to make judgements on logistic constraints for the various southern fronts as they have in the past because of: [redacted]; (2) the development of many additional routes through the DMZ and route redundancy in South Laos; (3) the great fall off in aerial photography of the Laos Trail.

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We continue to get pretty good information on volume of supplies entering the trail, partly because our bombing has forced the enemy to go more extensively to radio instead of land-lines. However, even this source is spotty and enemy radio blackouts could remove this last resource on supply flows.

Our information on personnel infiltration continues to be good and is even improving as additional transportation units use radio communication. [redacted]

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The amount of POW information getting back to Washington is limited and decreasing as our presence goes down. It appears that much material is available in SVN in Vietnamese. There is also an increasing time lag in getting the material back. Some reports being received now are from interrogations six months ago.

Comment:

[redacted]. However, contingency plans might be made for intensive seeding should this become important for maintaining a cease-fire. We should be able to get an adequate amount of aerial photography of South Laos. We should also improve our access to POW information on a current basis. Given the presence problem in SVN we should make provision to handle material in Vietnamese in the U.S.

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Timing of Comprehensive Assessment

I explored when additional indicators which would be useful for assessing capability and intentions for 1973 will be available.

Logistic movement south will speed up seasonally in November. But the analysts would like to watch it for a couple of months before they can give a fix on annual level and on direction.

The next major recruitment push will not be until about December. Those recruited in December will be trained for infiltration in March-May.

In short, capability can be assessed anytime. The CIA answer is essentially that NVN has the capability to infiltrate at the 1972 level of 250,000 in 1973 and to provide the logistics support (tanks and artillery may be another story dependent on the communist Allies). However, enemy intentions, what he actually will do in 1973, cannot be assessed until about January when additional infiltration, logistics, and recruitment information becomes available.

RECOMMENDATION

That in addition to Phil Odeen discussing the Laos trail photography and POW exploitation with [redacted] DIA and Paul Walsh in CIA, you arrange the contingency planning for sensors if cease-fire prospects make this desirable.

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That we do not begin a comprehensive VSSG assessment until December for completion in January-February.

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